



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety
and Inspection
Service

Washington, D.C.
20250

DEC 17 2002

Dr. Tony Zohrab
Director, Animal Products
MAF Regulatory Authority
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, New Zealand
ASB Bank House, 101-103 the Terrace
Post Office Box 2526
Wellington, New Zealand

Dear Dr. Zohrab:

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) conducted an on-site audit of New Zealand's meat inspection system from April 3 through April 30, 2002. Enclosed is a copy of the final audit report. Comments by New Zealand on the draft final audit report have been included as Attachment "G" in the enclosed final audit report.

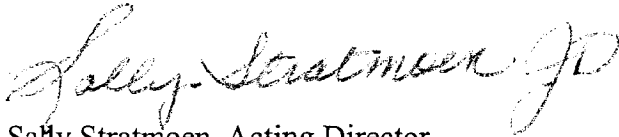
FSIS has carefully reviewed the assurances provided by New Zealand at the Exit Conference in Wellington on April 30, 2002 and the comments contained in your November 5, 2002 response to the draft final audit report. We appreciate your commitment to correct most of the deficiencies found during the audit. With regard to the omission of fecal contamination as a microbiological hazard, FSIS requires that it be included in the hazard analysis of each establishment and that it is listed as a critical control point. FSIS also requires a zero tolerance for fecal contamination.

Regarding monthly supervisory visits, FSIS is concerned that supervisory visits may not occur on a monthly basis under certain conditions. FSIS regulations (Section 327.2 of 9 Code of Federal Regulations) require "periodic supervisory visits by a representative of the foreign inspection system not less frequent than one such visit per month to each establishment certified..." for export to the United States and requires that these visits result in "written reports prepared by the representative of the foreign inspection system who has conducted a supervisory visit..." FSIS requires that (1) supervisory visits occur once each calendar month, (2) a report is generated from each visit, and (3) supervisory visits are made by a qualified official who is not assigned to 'inspect' the establishment. FSIS also expects that the visits and reports are used to ascertain trends relative to each establishment and to track and resolve the negative findings from each visit. These issues will be reviewed, in depth, during our next system audit of New Zealand.

Finally, as a reminder, if an establishment is delisted during an audit, FSIS does not accept a re-certification of the establishment until the government inspection service provides FSIS with a written description of all corrective and preventative actions that had been taken. In addition, the establishment would be re-audited during our next systems audit of the meat inspection system, provided the country had successfully re-certified the establishment for export to the United States. If a re-certified establishment is delisted again during the re-audit, FSIS would not accept the establishment as re-certified until FSIS auditors returned for another follow-up audit and were able to verify that all deficiencies have been corrected.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the final audit report, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience. I can be contacted by telephone at 202-720-3781, by e-mail at sally.stratmoen@fsis.usda.gov, or by facsimile at 202-690-4040.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sally Stratmoen JD".

Sally Stratmoen, Acting Director
Equivalence Staff
Office of International Affairs

Enclosure

cc:

Jason Frost, Counselor, Embassy of New Zealand
David Young, Minister Counselor, American Embassy, Wellington
Ross Kreamer, FAS Area Officer
Linda Swacina, Associate Administrator, FSIS
Karen Stuck, Acting DAA, OIA, FSIS
Maritza Colon-Pullano, SAIFS, OPPDE, FSIS
Clark Danford, IED, OIA, FSIS
Sally Stratmoen, ED, OIA, FSIS
Donald Smart, TSC, FSIS
Amy Winton, State Department
Gene Philhower, FAS
Richard F. Brown, ED, OIA, FSIS
Country File (New Zealand – FY 2002 Audit)